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Red: The True Story of Red Riding Hood by Liesl Shurtliff (review)

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Shurtliff, Liesl *Red: The True Story of Red Riding Hood.* Knopf, 2016 [288p]
Library ed. ISBN 978-0-385-75584-9 $19.99
Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-385-75583-2 $16.99
E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-385-75585-6 $10.99
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-5

Red's grandmother has given her more than a scarlet cape—she has also passed along her magical powers. Red, however, has trouble harnessing her abilities, and when, at the tender age of seven, one of her mis-spells nearly kills Granny, Red swears off magic forever. But when Granny gets sick, twelve-year old Red sets out on a quest for a cure, capturing dwarves, escaping enchanted castles, outsmarting a horribly misguided huntsman, and even using her powers—all with the aid of her bothersome but well-intentioned neighbor, Goldie, and an ever-present wolf with whom Red feels an unlikely kinship. The book suffers for its exhaustive and exhausting incorporation of mythical beings and other fractured fairy tales, and it strains under its insistence that Red and wolf share a spirit. Still, it's hard to resist a fairy tale retold, and there's enough cleverness and levity here for moments of real enjoyment. The imaginative spells, the twists on conventional plotlines, and Red's determined, independent nature mean that this picnic basket may still worth unpacking. AA

Smith, Amber *The Way I Used to Be.* McElderry, 2016 [384p]
Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-4814-4935-9 $17.99
E-book ed. ISBN 978-1-4814-4937-3 $10.99
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

It's winter break of Edy's freshman year when her life changes: her older brother's best friend, Kevin, rapes her in her own bedroom, threatening to kill her if she tells. She keeps it to herself, but the event shapes her, and the book traces its influence on her self-image and her relationships over the next three years. Those relationships include a serious connection with a sweet senior guy, whom she eventually pushes away; a distant platonic friendship with a once-nerdy guy; the party hookups she efficiently finds, beds, and dismisses; and her increasingly strained bond with her best friend, Mara. It's when she has successfully transformed herself into a hard-edged, bad-reputation senior that she's thunderstruck by the news: Kevin has been accused of raping a girl at college. This is a poignant advance on the old problem-novel version of the story where secrets are quickly revealed and malefactors punished; "I've seen enough TV movies to know you're supposed to tell," says Edy miserably, but the reality of accusing a beloved family friend is believably hard to surmount. Edy's post-victim pattern of changing and armoring herself is credible, and it blends authentically into normal adolescence. Smith manages to create a sympathetic portrait of a girl who'd be an unsympathetic acquaintance, as Edy relentlessly punishes herself and her friends in the place of the person who really deserves it. While Edy does eventually report the truth, it's no neat salvation, but the experience also demonstrates that her hostility and shame aren't enough to keep people from caring. Edy's exploration of the meaning of sexuality and intimacy will be thought provoking for teen readers of various experience levels, and this title is likely to find space alongside Anderson's *Speak* (BCCB 10/99) on counseling shelves. A brief author's note includes a relevant hotline number. DS